

Gov. Evers: Announces Wisconsin is taking big steps to increase COVID-19 testing capacity

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced that the state of Wisconsin is taking big steps to increase COVID-19 testing capacity throughout the state. Working with the Wisconsin Clinical Lab Network, the state has grown the number of labs performing COVID-19 tests from just eight labs one month ago to 36 labs as of today. The state plans to continue public-private partnerships to add more labs and more testing capacity in the days and weeks ahead. However, in order to sustain the existing and expanded clinical lab network's efforts, the state will need federal partnership to ensure availability of reagent and other critical supplies in Wisconsin. Testing is key to Wisconsin turning the dial on COVID-19 and reopening the state. With increased testing, Wisconsin gets a more accurate sense of the spread of the virus. More testing also means improved contact tracing efforts, which help identify possible exposures to COVID-19. Below is a summary of how far the state has come in expanding testing and actions being taken to conduct more tests.

Where Wisconsin started

Wisconsin started its COVID-19 testing efforts with a small group of dedicated labs, including the State Laboratory of Hygiene, the Milwaukee Public Health Lab, UW Health, Gunderson Lutheran, ACL Laboratories, Mayo Clinic, and Wisconsin Diagnostic Lab. This group helped build a critical base to grow from, and the state offers a special thanks to each of them for getting in on the ground floor.

Testing in the state needs to be increased, and thanks to Exact Sciences, Epic Systems, Marshfield Clinic Health System, the State Laboratory of Hygiene, the Wisconsin Clinical Lab Network, the City of Milwaukee Public Health Lab, the Wisconsin National Guard, and other important partners, Wisconsin is making that happen.

New Initiatives

This week, plans are in place to greatly accelerate testing in Wisconsin, including:

- 11 National Guard teams serving a rapid response role in hotspots and underserved areas of the state will collect specimens for COVID-19 testing. This weekend, one of those teams began using 1,100 Exact Sciences test supplies to offer testing to all inmates and staff at the Milwaukee House of Correction to help control the outbreak there. Starting today, two teams of citizen soldiers will also be staffing standup specimen collection sites at Milwaukee Health Services Inc.'s clinics on Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. and Silver Spring Road.
- The state is working with Tribal partners to ensure that their communities receive testing they need. Starting this week, 1,000 tests will be delivered per week to Tribal health clinics.
- **Exact Sciences** is devoting a significant portion of its lab capacity and resources to COVID-19 tests processing. This will enable them to provide the state with approximately 20,000 tests and processing each week, which will be distributed to health care systems throughout the State. This was a major effort by Exact Sciences undertaken in a very short amount of time.
- **Epic** is providing crucial assistance in our effort to distribute Exact Sciences' tests by providing the interoperability necessary to connect healthcare providers with Exact to ensure timely processing of tests and reporting of test results.
- **Promega** is providing major support by sourcing high demand reagents and materials for a number of labs in the state including Exact Sciences' lab. In addition to these materials, they've also shared equipment and provided invaluable problem-solving skills. They are a critical part of the supply chain in supporting expanded testing.
- This week, **Marshfield Clinic Health System** will be working on ramping up to process 10,000 tests per week from providers around the State.
- 2,200 test collection supplies and PPE are headed to Green Bay in response to an outbreak with significant risk potential to the community. Having these tools is essential to the local health department and healthcare system response.
- In partnership with **Exact Sciences** and the **Community Health Centers** in Milwaukee, the state is supporting additional testing capacity. The Health Centers will work first with their patients, and as additional capacity becomes available, will broaden their outreach to support access to testing for others in need. Community Health Centers have networks within the community and with other social service organizations and will work through those channels to support additional testing.
- **Wisconsin Diagnostic Labs** provided much-appreciated support to the 16th Street Community Health Clinic drive-thru testing project. They're also expanding their capacity and offering help to clinical partners experiencing challenges with access to lab capacity.
- Through additional procurement efforts by the state, Wisconsin will be receiving over 250,000 additional test collection supplies in the coming weeks.